

Duxbury bike path group takes a new route

First step: Get public opinion

By TOM BENSON
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DUXBURY — After seeing town meeting reject its request for money to build a 5-mile pedestrian and bicycle path, the town path council has changed direction.

The council has decided to seek public opinion before crafting a new route.

Tonight, it will present a conceptual proposal to the planning board, hoping that

discussions with town officials and residents will lead to a consensus.

Rather than concentrating on a specific route, this time the council is trying to determine what people want in a path.

"The process of putting a proposal forth generated a lot of discussion," path council Chairman Donald Larose said. "Even our fiercest opponents didn't say they were against a path per se."

In a 1996 town survey, as many as 70 percent of the respondents in some parts of town said they wanted a place to walk or bike along the town's busiest streets. That result spurred the town path movement.

However, the council's proposal was soundly rejected at town meeting. There were nearly twice as many "no" votes as "yes" votes.

The council decided to go back to the drawing board — and to invite the rest of the town along.

At the next town meeting, the town path article may not ask for money, just for approval of the concept developed over the year, Larose said.

The council is asking elemental questions like how wide the path should be, what it should be made of and where it should go.

If the concept is approved at town meeting, the council will probably come back the next

year to request money for stages of the path. Rather than propose the entire path at once, the group will design a path for the neighborhoods that ask for it, Larose said.

Once the concept is accepted, "then we'll try to build two or three miles per year," he said. "... We're going to find out what the town wants to embrace and then we'll try to design it."

The council hopes to get the support of the planning board and the selectmen before returning to town meeting.

The town path discussion is the first item on the planning board's agenda for tonight. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 in the small hearing room in the basement of town hall.